

Diann Jacox, Superintendent  
Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park  
P. O. Box 700  
Middletown, Virginia 22645

February, 2009

Dear Superintendent Jacox,

The members of the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park Federal Advisory Commission and the entities we represent are honored to serve as advisors and co-creators, along with the National Park Service (NPS), of a new model partnership park. Provided below are the commission's general comments and recommendations on the park's general management plan.

Pursuant to Section 9 of the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park Act, Public Law 107-373-107<sup>th</sup> Congress, December 12, 2002, the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park Federal Advisory Commission was formed and, through the participation and review process, provided advice and comment on the process that resulted in the National Park Service proposed General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park. The commission views the act as creating and providing the framework for a unique, cooperative arrangement among the NPS, the key partners, the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Virginia counties of Frederick, Shenandoah, and Warren, landowner representatives, the Virginia towns of Middletown and Strasburg, and the United States Forest Service. The Commission also acknowledges the roles and stewardship of the organizations that have contributed to the identification, preservation and management of the historical, cultural and natural resources within the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park.

#### **I. Consideration of Proposed Alternatives for National Park Management Responsibilities and Role**

Four basic alternatives were considered with regard to the potential responsibilities and role of the NPS in the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park (CEBE). These alternatives are summarized in the introduction to the plan, and are described in detail in chapter 2 of the plan, pp. 2-1-2-68.

After careful review and consideration, the Commission unanimously recommends Alternative D, as it has, in the Commission's view, the greatest prospect of enhancing the educational, cultural, and environmental richness of the park, while also leaving flexibility to accommodate the needs of the public and the various organizations and constituencies represented by the members of the Commission. The CEBE general management plan, and particularly Alternative D, creates a viable framework within which the NPS and Key Partners may cooperate and consult on matters of mutual interest.

The following summarizes the commission's general views on the elements of Alternative D, with the comments being specifically directed to the summary provided in table 2.7, section 2.13 of the plan, pp. 2-59-2-66.

## **II. Partnerships**

As set forth in alternative D, the commission supports a strong partnership between park partners, the NPS, landowners within the park, and public entities represented on the Federal Advisory Commission (FAC). The FAC recommends that the NPS and key partners, particularly, continue to meet regularly to cooperate in the overall management of the park and to provide advice to one another on an as-needed basis. The FAC recommends that key partners and others choose to enter into formal, written cooperative agreements with the NPS to shape the elements of their particular relationship.

## **III. Land Protection**

The FAC supports the land protection aspect of Alternative D, and encourages the NPS to purchase land from willing sellers within or outside of the park boundaries. The Commission also recommends that key partners and others work together to develop a land protection plan focusing on cultural landscapes, sensitive natural resources, and connections between the NPS and key partners' properties. The FAC acknowledges that the key partners and others, in addition to the NPS, may acquire and independently hold land within the park or outside of the present boundaries of the park.

## **IV. Cultural and Natural Resources Management**

The FAC as a whole, including each of the key partners, recognizes the cultural richness and value of the Shenandoah Valley region and is dedicated to protecting and managing cultural resources within the park using best practices outlined by the Secretary of the Interior. The FAC recommends that the NPS and CEBE staff work closely with key partners and landowners to: (a) acquire and preserve additional holdings that would complement and augment the present and future holdings of the NPS and the key partners; (b) assist key partners and local landowners with strategies to protect and manage significant cultural resources within and adjoining the park; and (c) enter into formal agreements with the key partners on cultural resource management. The FAC also supports the NPS's rehabilitation and use of the Whitham farm buildings and property.

The FAC recognizes the NPS expertise in natural resource management and encourages NPS staff to help develop strategies and provide advice for the protection and management of these resources.

## **V. Visitor Experience, Interpretation, and Education—Park Facilities— Transportation, Access and Circulation**

The FAC strongly supports the creation of the Alternative D NPS visitor center for the park. The FAC also supports the mission of coordinating visitor orientation and circulation throughout the park, as well as its educational services, consultation, and management assistance. The FAC recommends that Alternative D's focus on creating an integrated interpretive plan, development of a trail system, and interpretive media to enhance visitor experience should be seen as an important coordination effort by the NPS staff.

## **VI. Park Operations**

The Commission encourages the NPS to provide adequate staffing levels for CEBE.

## **VII. Technical Assistance -- Related Resources**

The FAC supports the concept of technical assistance as outlined in Alternative D, and views the NPS's ability to offer technical assistance as one of the core contributions of the NPS's presence within the park and the national historic district.

## **VIII. Potential Park Friends Group and NPS Fundraising Activities**

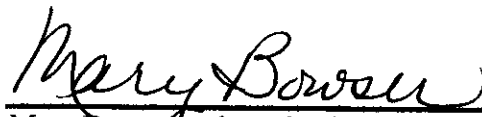
The FAC supports the formation by the NPS of a Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park friends group. The FAC recommends that any fundraising activities via a CEBE friends group be constituted and promoted so as not to cause confusion regarding the activities, needs and goals of the various Key Partners and other local charitable and public interest organizations.

## **IX. Management Zones**

The FAC supports the concept of management zones as described in section 2.4 on page 2-16.

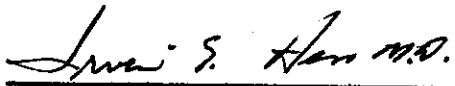
## **X. Signatures**

  
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Fred Andreae, National Trust for Historic Preservation

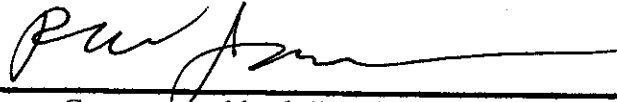
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mary Bowser, private landowner

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gene Dicks, town of Middletown

  
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Patrick Farris, Warren County



Irvin Hess, Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation



Randolph Jones, Commonwealth of Virginia



Sarah Mauck, town of Strasburg



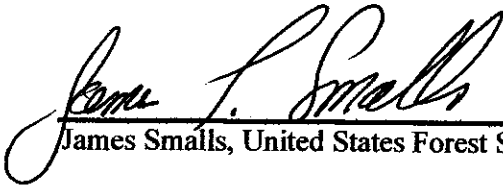
Elizabeth McClung, Belle Grove, Inc.



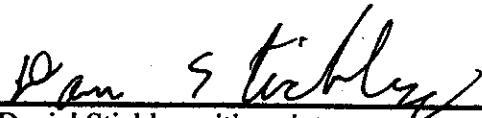
Gary Rinkemeyer, Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation



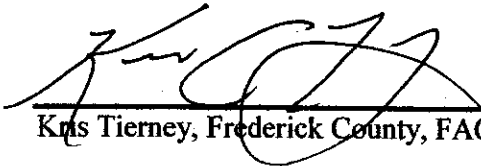
Pam Sheets, Shenandoah County



James Smalls, United States Forest Service



Daniel Stickley, citizen interest group



Kris Tierney, Frederick County, FAC chair